

Permanent Review Committee on the

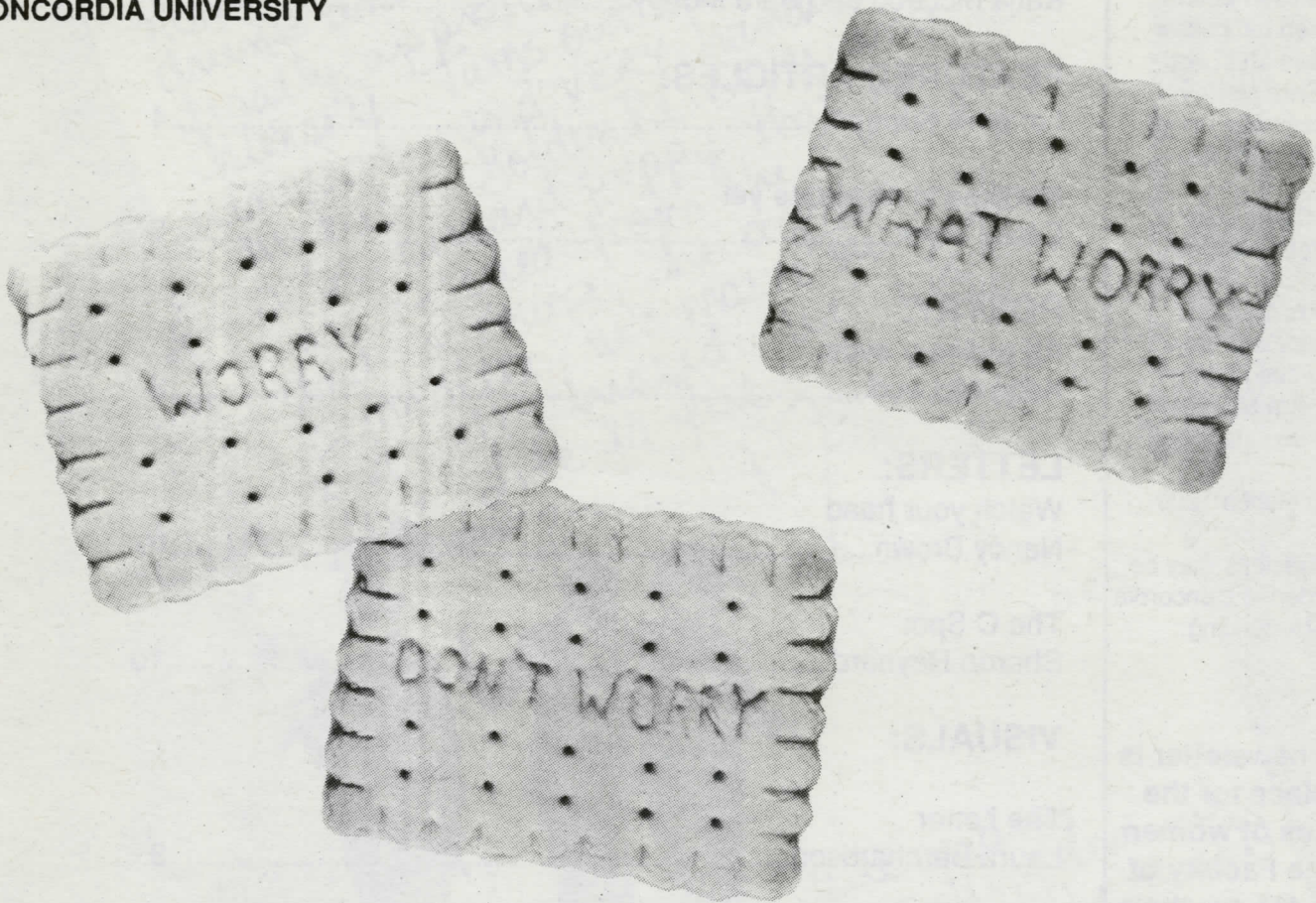
# Status of Women

FACULTY OF FINE ARTS

## newsletter

issue **5** april 1992

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY



## this issue:

- Speaking out against racism
- Celebrating Women?
- Gimmie Daycare! Fine Arts Children's Co-op
- Poetry : "An ordinary event"
- The Miss Canada Pageant

and lots more..



The Permanent  
Review Committee  
on the Status of  
Women, Faculty of  
Fine Arts Newsletter  
Concordia University

Issue 5  
April, 1992

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Submissions may be  
forwarded to Concordia  
VA Building.

This newsletter is  
a place for the  
voices of women  
in the Faculty of  
Fine Art, for their  
letters, their  
articles and their  
artwork. It serves  
as a forum where  
our  
subcommittees  
are listed, duties  
spelled out,  
accomplishments  
celebrated and  
new working  
members sought.

The Permanent Review Committee on the Status of Women for the Faculty of Fine Arts is non-heirarchically structured and operates by consensus. Our membership consists of students, teaching faculty and staff from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Concordia University. We are dedicated to fostering a gender-balanced forum to educate, to support and to change. We meet Thursdays 10-12 in VA 243. New members welcome to join any time.

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We met at my opening. He was nervous and star-struck. I was drunk and chain-smoking. He finally approached and introduced himself. Turns out he's a veterinarian, and VERY handsome! He has a Golden Retriever and a St. Bernard puppy that he just rescued from the S.P.C.A. And, of course, he adores Bernadette. He's marvelous; funny and well-dressed. We're in love. Life is fine.

CANADA 40



xoxo

Bette and my  
Sister, Lana out  
on the town!)



Printed below is our **LETTER OF SUPPORT** to the Women's Centre.

March 20, 1992  
Montreal

To the members of the Art Show Committee, Concordia Women's Centre:

This is to offer our support and respect for your decision to exclude certain works from the "Celebrating Women..." exhibition held during International Womyn's Week.

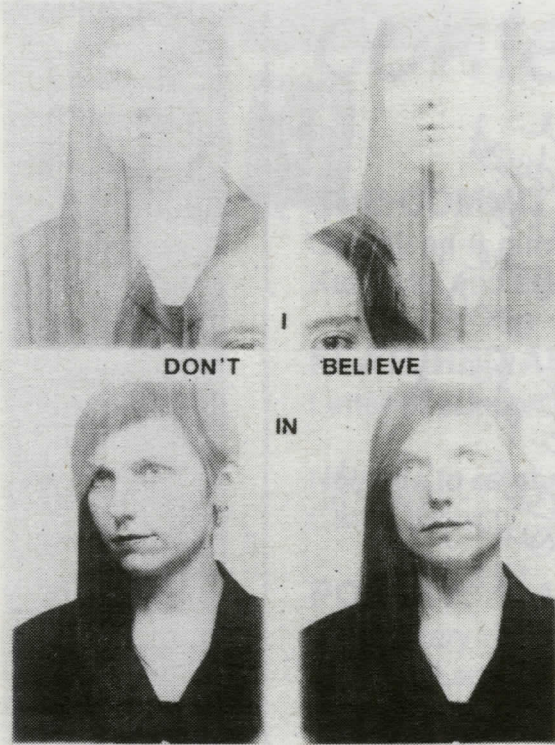
As co-sponsors of the exhibition, we agree that, in the context of a predominantly "white" exhibition with few representations of women of colour, the painting "Femme aux Bananes" would be extremely problematic. Whether or not the artist intended a racist stereotype is beyond the scope of a group exhibition committee; however, if such a committee itself deems certain work to be racist or sexist or otherwise against its interests as part of a larger group (in this case, both the Women's Centre and the Permanent Review Committee...), then by all means it should not be exhibited in an exhibition intended to represent that group. We also agree that, given that the "banana" piece was excluded, it was necessary to also exclude the two works which were similar in nature. Better to risk offending two or three artists than entire communities of people who are continually being offended, angered and hurt by seeing themselves represented or otherwise spoken for by people of privilege who unthinkingly exercise their "artistic license" or "academic freedom".

As a committee of artists, we recognize that we have a responsibility to be sensitive to this very complex issue of representation. As feminists, it is our mandate to promote equality on grounds of race as well as gender. This is not an issue of an innocent artist pitted against a fascist institution (as it has been represented in the various news media). No educated artist is innocent and a group of feminists questioning their position of power can hardly be considered fascists.

We recognize that this has been an extremely difficult time for you, given the unwarranted public attention. As Julianne Pidduck pointed out in her *Mirror* column, the media are just waiting for a chance to pounce on anything that they can call "politically correct", especially if it means feminist-bashing, too. Given the Women's Centre's commitment to "unlearning racism" and challenging sexism, it is very important that you made this decision to exclude work that perpetuates white women's position of power in western feminism. It takes courage to make this kind of decision and to stand by it in the face of overwhelming and reductivist media attention. Hopefully, you can be strengthened by the knowledge that you have sparked what should continue to be a long and searching discussion about art, representation and the responsibility of the privileged artist and academic in our community.

**Karilee Fuglem**  
and all the members of The Permanent Review Committee on  
the Status of Women, Faculty of Fine Art.

On Saturday, March 21, an adhoc committee of women from the Faculties of Fine Arts and Communications hosted a public forum to discuss the role of the media and some of the complexities of the issues of race, representation, and feminism surrounding the Women's Center Art Show.



Katja MacLeod



# Not Time to Celebrate Yet!

"Celebrating Women - Global Connections", the art show with the hopeful title, was a lesson in reality. It was a lesson, also, in denial and manipulation of reality. By reality, I mean: "the state of things as they are or appear to be, rather than as one might wish them to be." (*Collins English Dictionary*). One might wish there to be an art show where women of difference could freely express themselves through the production and display of images and objects which would celebrate and connect us all. Or, one might wish that we could all transport ourselves to a mythical time in which women are simple and are never exploited or exploitative. We might wish these things to be, and we might even try to make them appear to be. In fact, that is what happened in this year's art show. The result was a collision between lack of experience and lack of experience. In the case of the art show committee, it was our lack of experience which prevented us from foreseeing the problems inherent in a "non-juried" show with a theme that mixed politics, spirituality, and cultural diversity. For Lyne Robichaud, it was her lack of experience and lack of understanding of a culture which she chose to represent as she wished it to be.

This article comes in the aftermath of an astounding media campaign. Ms. Robichaud took her story to "La Presse" after her painting - "Femme Aux Bananes"- was rejected by the art show committee. We told her why we rejected it. We used the "R" word: Racist. We did not call her a racist, but we said the image could be read as a racist stereotype. Over the next few days, the story spread across the country in the newspapers and on radio and television. The media, for the most part, were not too interested in the "R" word. They were much more interested in the "C" word: Censorship. In terms of morning and evening entertainment, we - The Women's Centre - became "the bad guys". They took polls: how many people in the country thought that a picture of a black woman with bananas on her head was racist? Not surprisingly, many people felt it was simply an innocent image which had been unjustly censored. Obviously, we - The Women's Centre - were being "excessively politically-correct", to use Ms. Robichaud's term.

"...In a society governed by an etiquette of acceptance of cultural and ethnic others, racism would be the faux pas, not anger in response to it." (Adrian Piper, *Xenophobia and the Indexical Present*)

feminist art, literature, media and film criticism. We now have an extensive body of discourse from which we can educate ourselves to be critical about images which are used to degrade, dehumanize and exploit us. As white women we challenge these art and media images that have been forced upon us. We can easily identify the stereotypes which insult us: the semi-nude blonde on the hood of the car who appears eager to be raped, the "June Cleaver"- clone housewife, the limp, lifeless, passive artist's model draped on a couch in his studio. But we don't see images of black women in "high" art or in the media as often as we see the blonde caucasian woman. What we do see, however, is the "exotic" woman of colour in a wet t-shirt advertising Club Med. We see the "exotic" woman of colour bringing us a fruit and umbrella-laden cocktail in the nightclub. We see the "exotic" asian woman carrying our steak-teriyaki to our first-class seat on the 747. We see the "exotic" brown-skinned woman picking coffee beans or pineapple, waiting anxiously for the white man in the white suit to come...will her produce be good enough for his high standards? We see the plump black matriarch in her colourful bandanna selling "primitive crafts" to us in the island marketplace, while around her "happy" children play. We see a poster distributed by the Canadian International Development Agency, a branch of the Canadian Government, in which images of plump black matriarchs in bandannas, and plump brown children, are surrounded with overflowing baskets of food, denying the reality that "by the year 2000, women and girls will account for 70 percent of the 1.1 billion people living in absolute poverty in farming areas of developing countries" (United Nations Survey, Geneva, reported in *Montreal Gazette*, Feb. 25, 1992). When these kinds of images help us to "forget" this kind of reality, it is crucial that we start to identify these images as racist. We had better start saying the "R" word."

"In the 1980's (and 90's), various groups, such as the women of color movement, are expanding the definitions of, and possibilities for, feminism. But many women's reactions to diversity interfere with learning from others and making successful cross-cultural, multi-racial coalitions. I call these divisive reactions because bringing up racism or class or homophobia is not itself divisive to the movement. Rather, what is divisive is ignoring such issues or being unable to



Important work has been done in the area of

(continued on page 8...)



# IMAGES OF A POWER-FULL IMAGINATION

## STRAIGHT TALK

Published by the Ontario Black Community Development Council



Vol. 1, Number 7

## NON-WHITES



## FLOOD TORONTO

ISS 0001 00-000



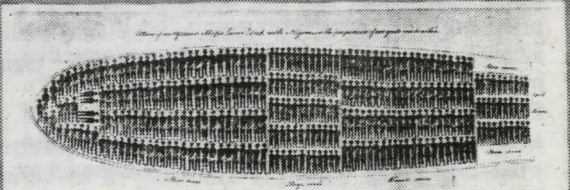
The Secret War in Egypt  
By  
PHYLLIS SCHILSKY

Other articles by  
MARY BARCLAY LEE  
PAT WALSH  
MARTIN A. LARSON  
GLEN GIBBY WATTS

SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS



91. Winslow Homer (1839-1910), *Cotton Pickers*, 1876. Oil on canvas, 24 x 36 inches. Private Collection.



180 THE GAZETTE, MONTREAL, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1992

## UN forecasts bleak future for rural women

Access to credit would help free them from poverty trap, agency says

JANE TODD  
SOUTHERN NEWS

GENEVA — A United Nations survey of rural life in the Third World says that by the year 2000, women and girls will account for 70 per cent of the 1.1 billion people living "in absolute poverty" in farming areas of developing countries.

"The world's population is about 5 billion. The report by the UN's International Fund for Agricultural Development, blames the increasing 'feminization' of rural poverty on desperate economic conditions that are causing men to migrate to urban areas, either in their own countries or richer lands overseas.

"A new picture of the rural woman — on her own, working 14 to 17 hours a day to bring up her family and to put food on the table, increasingly without a man to help," has emerged in many of the 114 developing countries that the time-based UN agency surveyed.

"The face of rural poverty is increasingly female," Idries Jazairy, of Geneva, the agency's resident, said yesterday. He said the social catastrophe is deepening and "has progressed most rapidly in those regions where droughts, erosion and deforestation have sapped the productivity of agriculture."

"The findings of Jazairy's agency are to be taken up today and tomorrow in Geneva, where about 60 wives of world leaders — most from the Third World — have gathered to try to focus international attention on the rural 'poverty trap'.

"The aim of what UN officials are calling 'the summit of first ladies' is to get them to front the UN agency's own ideas about how to make it easier for impoverished Third World women. Topping the list is better access to credit.

"The poor in general have limited access to credit. Those who live in rural areas have even less. Women have the least of all. Worldwide, only 7 to 11 per cent of loans go to women. Why is this?" one briefing paper asks.

"The number of poor rural women increases by 5 million each year worldwide. Most don't own land, aren't eligible for loans and are hardly mentioned in their countries' economic plans and statistics — although they're a visible force



Rural women: working 14 to 17 hours a day to raise family and to put food on the table

that help keep things running. The briefing paper argues that at a cost of \$750 million per year, loans of just \$50 per person could help 15 million Third World women a year save themselves and their families from a life of desperation.

The UN agency said its experience has shown that money invested "especially in this army of forgotten women," would be money well spent, IFAD experts said.

In Africa, women — widows or independent wives whose husbands are looking for work in cities or abroad — produce 70 per cent of the food.

The agency cited the example of Santamaya, a 28-year-old Nepalese woman from a village north of Kathmandu. With no land and no means to earn money, she could barely eke out living for herself and her two children.

A small loan from UN funds, however, helped put Santamaya on her way toward economic independence. She spent 120 rupees (\$5.50) on beehive and 3,000 rupees on a loom that she used to weave rugs.

With the money she earns selling rugs, Santamaya not only supports her children and sends them to school, but also has repaid the loan and saved some money.

The summit will look for ways to implement program aimed at attacking poverty, sickness, lack of education and agricultural problems.

Whether this week's gathering in Geneva can help avert increasing Third World poverty is questionable, however. Along with the question of who would finance loans, social and cultural barriers may block an upgrading of women roles, even though millions of women in the Third World are vital in providing for and raising their families.

Jazairy says large increases in rich countries' foreign aid budgets are not the issue. Instead, the primary challenge is to reorient the budget priorities of governments and international donor agencies.

IFAD's grim report on chronic poverty among Third World women opens by declaring: "One figure alone speaks of the magnitude of the crisis — the number of rural women living in poverty in the developing countries has increased by a most 50 per cent over the past 20 years to a staggering 365 million."

This is 60 per cent of what the UN agency says its current estimate of 939 million desperately impoverished rural people worldwide.

The agency's figures indicate that more than 60 million rural women in Third World countries "act as sole heads of their households, caring for 333 million other family members."

The number of poor rural women throughout Asia, estimated at 363 million, is greater than the population of Western Europe.

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

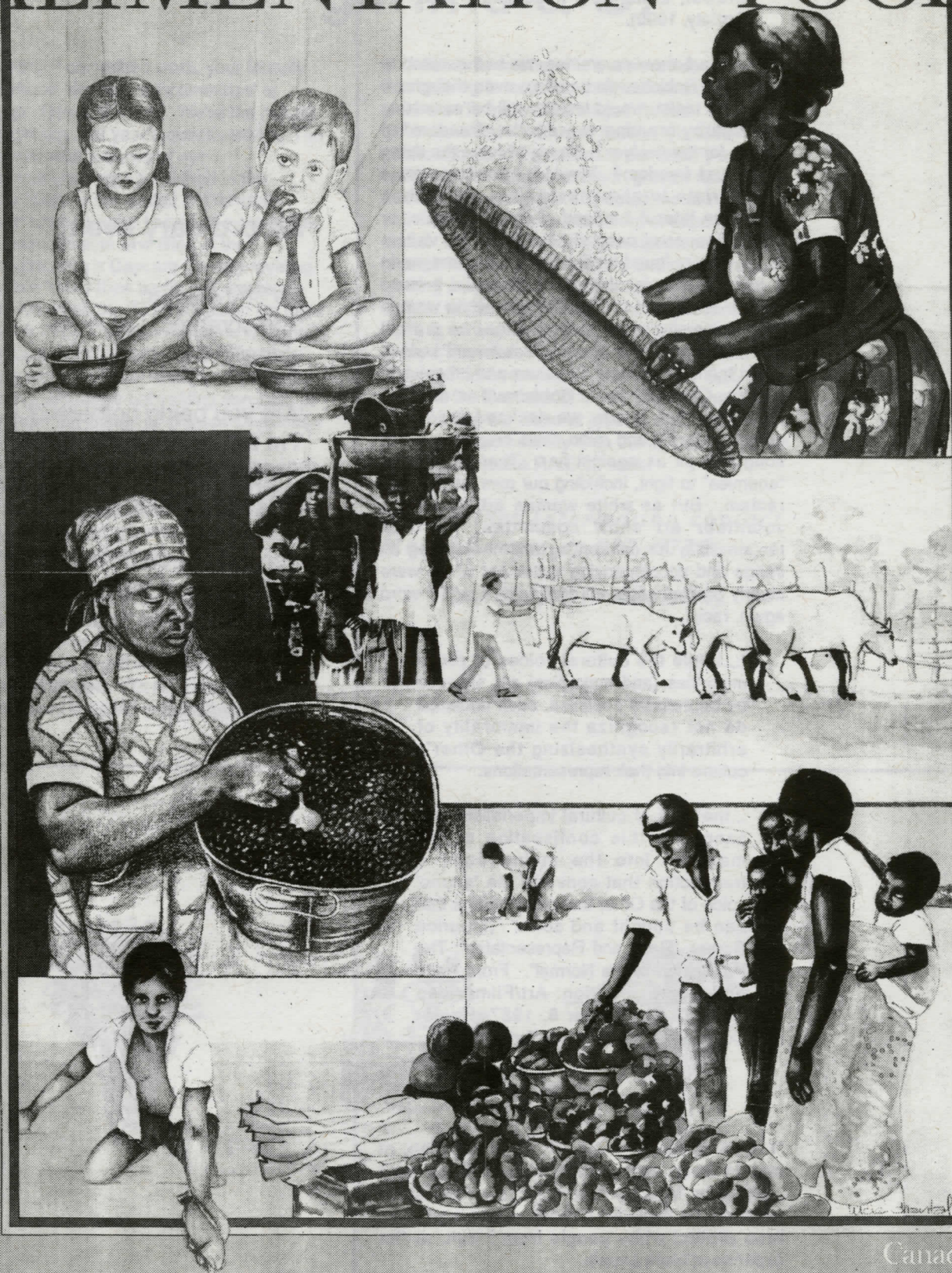


photo montage: Cathy Sisler

Sources, left to right: white supremacist journals (Scarborough, Ont., 1979 and American, 1967); *Cotton Pickers*, painting by Winslow Homer, 1876; plan of African slave ship lower deck, 19th cent.; article, *The Montreal Gazette*, Feb. 25, 1992; refugee camp, Bangladesh, from Ms. Jar. /Feb 1992, article listing disasters in 1991.



# ALIMENTATION • FOOD



Canada



...

respond to them constructively." (Charlotte Bunch, "Making Common Cause - Diversity and Coalitions" from Bridges of Power-Women's Multicultural Alliances. Lisa Albrecht, Rose M. Brewer, Editors. (Philadelphia, New Society, 1990).

If, as an art show committee, we had decided to show Ms. Robichaud's painting, even though we saw it as racist, would we not still be exercising privilege by granting viewers the "freedom" to decide for themselves? Do we all have the same amount of freedom? Would it have been more appropriate to show the painting and then apologize later if it offended certain people, or certain groups of people? If none of the visitors to the gallery found it offensive, would that mean it was not a racial stereotype, or would it mean that no one noticed? Certainly, as white women on a university art show committee, we are not authorities on issues of race. But we are serious about trying to educate ourselves and other white people. Certainly Lyne Robichaud is not "the enemy", which is why we declined to involve ourselves in TV and radio news programs which sought to pit us against her. There are many "enemies" to fight, including our own internalized racism. But as white women artists on a volunteer art show committee, we took responsibility for confronting and challenging an image and accompanying statement which were clearly problematic and, dare I say the "R" word again, racist.

"...While the cultural voices of racial minorities (and majorities) are silenced by oppressive societies, such societies do not recognize the immorality of arbitrarily synthesizing the Other's culture into their representations.

...the kind of cultural imperialism that sanctions this confiscation of the marginal into the mainstream, a transaction that converts the 'exotic' voice of the Other into commodities that can be bought and sold." (Maurice Berger, "Race and Representation: The Production of the Normal". From Race and Representation: Art/Film/Video Exhibit, Jan 26-Mar 6, 1987, Hunter College Art Gallery, New York City).

...

"I keep referring to the "R" word because, at certain times during the controversy, we were advised by legal counsel not to say "Racist" or we could be liable for slander. Once again, our laws protect white people from insult, at the expense of black people.

March 9, 1992

Cathy Sisler

## An ordinary event

He shoves her.  
She screams: leave me alone.

'Are you being bothered?'  
'I'm not bothering her.  
I'm (just) her old man.  
I'm (only) talking to her.'

Her eyes become slits.  
She stares at me.  
I have no other choice  
but to leave.

Katja MacLeod





# Gimme a F, gimme a A, gimme a C, gimme a C.

After 2 years of committee work, your friendly neighbourhood 'daycare subcommittee' is packing up. Remember us? We're the people who brought you last year's questionnaire. The results, along with a series of our recommendations, were published in the December issue of the Status of Women's newsletter: what seemed to be the most urgent need of those parents who filled in the questionnaire, was a Daycare Co-op providing more flexible hours than traditional daycare situations would allow. To fill this need we have founded F.A.C.C. This new Fine Arts Children's Co-op of Concordia is designed for Fine Arts' students, staff and faculty who have children and are willing to exchange babysitting services. A facilitator from the Status of Women Committee will aid in getting the Co-op started and maintained until it eventually can function on its own. We hope that this new Co-op will be useful for Fine Art parents and their children. In this issue you will find the general Co-op regulations as well as a registration form.

Another need we tried to address this year was to find a space within the University that could be used by parents and their children. Since space in the VA building is extremely limited, we got a clear "no" to that one. We also tried to get changing tables installed in the VA building men's

and women's washrooms but were informed that this building is too toxic an environment for young children. To quote Sue Magor, Director of Environmental Health and Safety: "To allow public access to these areas, particularly small children, who may be at much greater risk than adults, is irresponsible and could result in legal action should a serious accident or exposure occur. We had considered the option of installing change tables near the gallery and posting signs alerting parents to the hazards and limiting access to designated areas. At the present time, there is no way to control access to hazardous areas. Therefore the idea has been rejected." So, don't hold your breath here, either. Still, we feel that the Daycare Committee has done its best to bring the issue of parents and kids within the Fine Art community onto the agenda - now it's up to you to make F.A.C.C. work!

*For further information contact  
Maria Torres at 697-6726.*

**Katja MacLeod and Sara Morley**





# Letters:

## "Watch Your Head"

When is a piece of art work racist? It is interesting that a certain work recently created such an uproar, an uproar which I think is ultimately positive because it sparks questions. Is a painting of a black women with bananas on her head racist? What if it was painted by a black woman? Well the paintings context is important. We live in an era which has started to reject the notion of art being god-like, transcending mortality, reality, existing in a timeless state. This particular work was painted by someone other than a black woman which I think is an important aspect to keep in mind. If it was painted by a black woman this would place the work in a different context. The problem I have with the notion of black people being represented by white people with bananas on their head is that this is an image that I have encountered in modernist paintings, National Geographic Magazines and in art galleries. It is rare that I have seen art work of black women in any other way, and I think this is the real problem. It seems odd that so much dispute is generated for an image that is already overexposed and accepted. Why hasn't there been as much controversy about all the artwork by women that has been written out of history books? Or similarly art work by women and men that is critical of the status quo and isn't seen at all? Could it be because stereotypes keep certain people in line, out of the competitive world of art? Stereotyping plays a role in isolating people, and of keeping people ignorant of other cultures. Lets face it, the modernist era has been a system of absolutism and exclusionism. Stereotypes are power plays, they can keep people within a certain culture suppressed. The key to the abolishment of stereotypes, starts with first recognizing that they exist, then, wrestling to get a multiplicity of views heard and shown.

Nancy Brown.

## "C Spot"

Censorship. It's become a sensitive area, a contentious spot. Should something or someone be censored? Whose choice is it to censor? When is censorship appropriate? Who decides when censorship is appropriate? When does it go too far? Where is the line drawn between the rights of the individual and the rights of society? Is there another choice besides censorship?

Sharon Raynard.





# SAYING GOODBYE TO THE MAGIC

- by Ms Laura Jean Bernhardson

YOU KNOW, THE THING THAT REALLY BURNS ME IS THEY NEVER EVEN BOTHERED TO ASK ME WHAT I THOUGHT. I MEAN, HOW HARD WOULD IT HAVE BEEN FOR THEM TO SAY, "LAURA, WE'RE THINKING OF ENDING THE PAGEANT FOREVER. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?"



NO, I'M NOT BITTER. IT'S JUST THAT, WELL, IT WAS THE MOST SPECIAL TIME OF MY LIFE. I KNOW IT SOUNDS CORNY, BUT THERE WAS MAGIC IN THE AIR. AND NOW IT WON'T EVER HAPPEN AGAIN. LIKE, WE WORKED REAL HARD TO GET THE DANCING JUST RIGHT AND ALL THAT.



AND WHEN THEY ANNOUNCED THE FIRST RUNNER-UP, AND IT WASN'T ME — THAT COULD ONLY MEAN ONE THING. GOD, I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT! AND I WAS DAMN PROUD TO BE MISS CANADA.

Laura Bernhardson



OK, SURE, MAYBE IT IS A LITTLE OLD-FASHIONED AND ALL THAT BUT I DON'T CARE. I STILL WRITE TO THE OTHER CONTESTANTS AND I WENT TO THE MARITIMES TO VISIT MISS NOVA SCOTIA LAST SUMMER. AND I CAN STILL HEAR THE AUDIENCE'S APPLAUSE ECHOING IN MY EARS...





continued...margot waddell audre lorde erica carter patricia garfield suzanne st. cyr anna marie nicholson sylvie bernier  
sally weber nancy fraser linda hutchison jessica evans karen knorr roberta mcgrath heather stewart sydney dinsmore  
harriet casdin silver gabrielle buffet picabia dr. lotti steinitz sears phyllis lambert kate steinitz suzanne duchamp june  
singer nancy drew jacquetta hawkes elizabeth hanes dr. judith l. rapport c.j. taylor ellen gabriel shirley beljou irena  
ionesco margit rowell jacqueline chenieu bette midler gertrude rachell levy anna balakian jennifer mundy jane livingston  
christine boyer martha buskirk clara weyergraf serra iris marion young carol pateman frieda fordham marie bonaparte  
margaret kesselring mary van stolk karen horney ruth benedict maria montesorri clara thompson caroline brotzler  
prosser pam korza susan straight sylvia kolbowski rosetta brooks dolores hayden linda benedict jones ann hamilton  
deborah torville louise bourgeois leonor fini lisa tickner maryse holder joan semmel anita steckel monona rossoll jackie  
brookner edith schreiber aujame flavia rando mira schor erica rand mary ann caws susan danly mirella bandini elizabeth  
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gunnarson marie cantion vandana shiva brenda wallace alice adams agnes denes melissa crenshaw donna dennis  
nancy holt miralda magdalena abakanowicz tania mourand riane eisler rachel bagby amelia jones marti kheel monica  
sjoo ana mendieta mary beth edelson ariska razak ynestra king bohumila grogerova ilse garnier gloria feman orenstein  
irene diamond sally abbot susan griffin rachel carson charlene spetnak iris murdoch rozika parker laura mulvey harriet  
whitehead anette kuhn marisol patricia bosworth judith preckshof gwen raaberg silbyl colefax giovanna bourbieri  
lineage

for cody for

daughters and sons

this is a list of a few women

who influence have influenced may influence

many numbers of women and men..the list is subjective and defined as incomplete with controversy perhaps without  
controversy help us to continue our past and presence... inez hedges maryann de julio madelaine cottenet-hage georgina  
colville giselle prassinis joyce mansour valentine hugo sheila legge x diana brinton lee dawn ades georgina harding  
sister sheila hammond eve sonneman donna karan tanita takaram jodie foster mia farrow sophie tucker kim campbell  
heidi leontyne price chantal michetti erika billeter cheryl dunye judith mallin young dianne arnold betsy knapp  
margaret hayward jessica strang lorraine johnson martina navratilova caroline viau michelle cliff mineko grimmer nicole  
brossard catherine belsey lani maestro nell tenoff lydia clarke whitney chadwick kristin jones sarah tamor lamia  
doumato danielle berthiaume sophi jasmine pamela landry ita kendell helen goetz cathy mullen irene whittome kathy  
wiggan jacqueline wilson isabelle filion claudette seguin kate mcdonnell torie toward laura bernhardson jim me yoon  
dr. claudie solar jana sterbak dominique blain jocelyn aloucherie carolyn lisser rafman sally spilhaus danette steele  
lorraine toscano deborah margot danica jojich barbara layne marielle nitoslawska francine poitras ritva steppanen  
dr. rose sheinin leah sherman kathryn tweedie norma wagner susan scott holly king shelley reeves marion wagschall  
carol wainio susan magor mona duval kathy adams dr. marianne ainley gosztanyi therese chabot penepole cousineau  
elaine denis andrea fairchild reesa greenberg lorraine wild lilianna berzerowsky diane charbonneau lorraine andre annie  
galaise judy garfin janice helland lynn hughes dr. ellen james dr. kaarina kailo judith kelly elizabeth langeley dr. lucie  
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kathryn walters kat obrien janice mcclaren petra mueller cathy sisler andrea wollensak katja macleod miriam cooley  
barbara m. balfour judith cezar karilee fuglem ruhi hamid charlene eldridge wheeler peggy chin donna hauxhurst sue  
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madonna ann kerby suzanne belson beatrice pearson colleen ovenden madelaine lajambe susan evans liz mcquiston  
angela issajenko viola spolin laura muntz lyall carol simard laflamme antonnia astorio gae aulenti gudrun baudisch  
catherine budd ida clarke clarice cliff elsie de wolfe alexandra exter kate faulkner natalia goncharova betty joel vally  
wieselthier maria yakunchikova holly cole afra scarpa annie lennox angela idelson kylikki karppinen jacqueline groag  
dorothy larcher celandine kennington mathilde flogl lena horn marlene creates nina sabnini to be continued.....